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WREATH
OF SONG

BUCKNER

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A WREATH OF SONG.

A WREATH OF SONG

BY

FRANKLIN F. BUCKNER

A verse may find him who a sermon flies.
—George Herbert.

LOCKPORT, N. Y.:
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1908

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FRANKLIN F BUCKNER

TO MY WIFE.

THIS wreath of song was first for thee,
Who praised it with sincerity.
Thy life so true, so free from wrong,
Is sweeter than the sweetest song.
Though years have passed, I count divine
The day that linked thy life with mine;
And try such fortune to deserve,
By seeking daily how to serve.
'Tis summer yet for you and me
Who ne'er have known adversity,
And should we see the winter's snows,
May love still bloom a fragrant rose,
And wisdom come in hand with truth,
And age reflect the heart of youth.

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BEATRICE.

BEATRICE.

WE loved each other to the last,
Locked each to each by fatal clasp,
Nor had we either will or power,
O'er destiny from the first hour,
We met beside the Arno's stream,
Made golden by the full moonbeam.
We looked into each other's eyes,
And read the will of Paradise,
And felt our souls melt into one,
As streams unite and onward run.
We could not help it, she nor I,
Nor had more power o'er destiny,
To change our course when once begun,
Than earth has power to quit the sun,
And seek an orbit 'round a star,
That shines a billion miles afar.

We knew each other from the start,
As each soul knows its counterpart;
And on my bended knee I'd swear
We'd met before, sometime, somewhere,
In ages past or in a dream,
So natural did our meeting seem.
Our love was born so instantly,
We knew it had a right to be,
To fill our souls in that first hour,
As fragrance fills the opening flower:
So free we were from beastly sense,

So fresh with youthful innocence,
So full of pulsing happiness,
That tongue is powerless to express
The rapture of the magic birth,
Which broke our fetters with the earth.

'Tis wondrous how the heart can change;
To what extent our feelings range;
And how the earth, and sky, and sea
Are changed in hours of ecstacy.
To-day is old, to-morrow new,
According to the point of view;
Or sorrows come, or joys enhance,
According to the circumstance.
Did I on higher summits live?
The wrongs against me all forgive?
Where thistles grew, did roses grow?
My heart go out to friend and foe?
Was life no longer servitude?
Was prayer a hymn of gratitude?
Love had transformed me in a day,
And swept my former self away.

Our joy so innocent and pure,
We somehow felt could not endure;
It may be instinct told us so,
At any rate we seemed to know,
And suffered greatly from our fears,
And Beatrice gave herself to tears,
Grew pale and thin from loss of sleep.
I could not bear to see her weep—
It gave me such a sense of guilt,

That flower so young and fair should wilt;
For, truly did it seem that I
Was author of her malady,
That unseen powers had chosen me
To fill their wretched agency,
And blight as fair a thing as birth
Had ever given to grace the earth.

'Twas plain to see that in her heart,
Was something she would not impart;
We'd never spoken of the past;
It fearful gates were bolted fast,
And it seemed better to be blind,
Than read the fate that lurked behind:
For she was born of quality,
While I had sprung from less degree,
From loins of rugged honesty,
From men of gallant bravery,
Who ne'er had reached the high commands,
Nor lived from wealth of fertile lands.

Love in an ardent enterprise,
Was never known to recognize
The barriers of blood or birth,
Or any artificial worth.
Then why should she and I begin,
Because our love was counted sin?

She pined, and I resolved to know
The cause, but dreaded still the blow;
For though the heart with grief will burst,
It will demand and know the worst.
I drew her kindly to my breast,

And firmly, but as kindly pressed
Her to unfold her mind and tell
Her secret though 'twere horrible.
She trembled strangely as she heard
My plea, but uttered not a word,
But with composure in her face,
Released herself from my embrace,
And drew a dagger from its sheath,
Whose blade flashed like a silver wreath,
And swifter than the flying dart,
She sank it in her quivering heart,
So deep that there was nothing left,
Except the polished ivory heft;
Then with a look of awful fear,
She bounded like a wounded deer,
And falling forward on her face,
She tore the dagger from its place,
And life and blood with gurgling sound,
Escaped from out the ragged wound.
It froze me fast; I could not stir,
But fixed as stone I gazed on her,
So gently breathing, dying there,
Her face half-hidden in her hair.
O God of mortals! Could it be,
A dream, or bare reality!
My soul was with such misery fraught,
I had no longer power for thought.
The stars grew pale in their retreat;
The whole earth trembled 'neath my feet;
A roaring sea consumed my breath,
And overwhelmed me as in death.

When slumber o'er the eyelids creep,
Where strays the soul in hours of sleep?
With all the senses safely furled,
It rears itself another world,
Of mountains, valleys, seas and streams,
Made perfect by its golden dreams.
But awful is that fearful sea
That drowns the mind, insanity,
When sense and consciousness have fled,
And man yet lives, but lives as dead,
With demons glaring in his eyes,
All bent on fearful enterprise.

I saw her fall, and I fell too:
The blade that killed her, ran me through;
And reason vanished at a stroke,
But to return. When I awoke,
The night had passed and sullen day
Was draped in gloom by clouds of gray.
I sat before my own hearthstone,
Where I was wont to live alone;
The fire was out, the doors were barred,
And all things seemed confused and hard;
The breath of flowers was in the rooms,
Not as from gardens, but from tombs—
The flowers whose tender perfumes spread
A parting opiate o'er the dead.
And there were banks of withered flowers;
And others fresh as summer showers;
And there half-hidden was the face
Of my beloved Beatrice:

And o'er it spread the same sweet smile
Of gentle worth it bore erstwhile.

I gazed on her with tearless eyes;
No horror felt, not e'en surprise.
As if I had been made of steel,
I had no longer power to feel.
As cyclones sweep the valleys fair,
And lay the fields and forests bare,
The tempest in my helpless brain,
Had wrought depletion in its train.
The half my former self was gone,
Which left a mere automaton.
'Twas plain that I had wrecked a tomb,
And borne its burden to my room,
That only maniac could engage,
In worse than pagan sacrilege,
And yet with this intelligence,
I could not reck the consequence.
In all the world did ever one,
Such ghastly deed since time begun?

So day by day beside the dead,
I lived alone and felt no dread,
No sense of wrong, no pang of grief,
But with the cunning of a thief,
I hid the corpse where none could see,
And found delight in secrecy.
But now as time wore further on,
My mind again began to dawn,
And sleepless sorrow to encroach,
Which brought a sense of self-reproach,

And wretched fear and agony.
I prayed a thousand times to die,
Or vowed her body should resume,
Its holy place within the tomb.
Though vowed again, and yet again,
My vows were weak and all in vain.
I had no force of mind to free,
My hand of its infirmity;
And as my pain grew more acute,
My will grew more irresolute,
Till the pale Beatrice came to be,
At last, a sad necessity.

But now I'll tell a thing most strange:
It is that Beatrice did not change.
Like marble statue there she lay,
Too fair and holy to decay;
And e'en the roses dyed each cheek,
Till one would think that she must speak,
Or grant the heart a glad surprise,
By opening her lustrous eyes.
Her spirit lingered everywhere,
Like incense filled the solemn air;
She sat with me the fire beside,
In the long winter eventide;
She kneeled beside me when I prayed;
And when I wept my grief allayed;
And in the light of pale moonbeams,
She walked beside me in my dreams;
Nor morn, nor eve, nor night, nor day,
Would she consent to go away.

At last she made me understand,
I must obey the Lord's command;
That there could be no rest for her,
Until the blackened sepulchre
Should have her body as the toll,
Of cruel earth, and God her soul;
For if I loved her then I must,
Earth give to earth and dust to dust,
That she might leave and take her place,
Among the fair angelic race.

I knew the word had come from her,
And needed no interpreter.
'Twas joy to think I could obey;
So when the shadows closed the day,
I bore the body to its place,
And bade farewell to Beatrice.

March 9th, '08.

CONFESSIONAL.

CONFESSIONAL.

HE pray'd to God all day;
With heart pain did he pray;
But if his prayer was heard,
Heaven returned no word,
Nor pity did display:
But left him stray
Alone till ev'ning gray.

The stars came out at night,
And shone with hazy light;
The while the penitent
Outward his pleadings sent
To Him beyond our sight.
With heart a-fright,
Night pass'd to morning bright.

"There is no power to free
My soul from agony;
Oh, had I ne'er been born,"
He cried, "than breast the storm
Of merciless decree;
Life is fatality,
An overwhelming sea.

"God is no longer now
A power to whom I'll bow;
The heavens are unfair,
And laugh at our despair;
A flower beneath the plow,
O man art thou
Sav'd by thine upturned brow?

"The gods are deaf and dumb,
While pain our souls benumb;
  But when our hearts are gay,
  As on a holiday,
'Tis said they grant a crumb;
    Then shadows come
Again to make us glum.

"If days are foul or fair,
Or if the soul despair,
  Or glad or sad we must,
  In spite retain our trust.
For me, I've ceased to care;
    I beat the air—
God is not here nor there.

"With hope and fear I cried;
With ev'ry tongue beside;
  From anguish I was mad,
  Yet all I felt forbade
That I in man confide:
    I sought His side,
To have my pray'r denied.

"'Tis human to endure;
'Tis false that we inure
  The life to pain and sorrow;
  Some surcease we must borrow,
A little rest secure;
    This to insure,
I'll seek a soul that's pure.

"For some pure heart I yearn;
Elsewhere I dare not turn;
I must, I must confess
My crime and wretchedness;
For hells within me burn;
God's deaf; I'll learn
If purity can spurn.

"O, pure one on a time
I did an awful crime;
My soul before was white,
But now is black as night;
My heart once pure as thine,
And sweet as thyme,
Is foul as foulest grime.

"How could such crime succeed?
For 'twas a treacherous deed;
A friend was sacrificed,
And I was brutalized;
I stood and watch'd him bleed
With envious greed,
While shivering like a reed .

"We liv'd beside, we three;
The man and I and she
Who call'd herself his wife;
Between them was no strife,
But true felicity.
And what of me?
I lov'd her secretly.

"I should have gone away;
But something made me stay;
I saw their love and then
My heart became a den
Of serpents day by bay:
At last 'twas May,
And I had ceas'd to pray.

"One night I stay'd behind,
And broke to her my mind
Which I would not conceal;
'Twas stupid over-zeal;
To hear me she declin'd;
'Though love is blind,
She said I was unkind,

"To tempt her soul with wrong;
For she did not belong
To those of evil fame,
Who shudder at no shame,
And ne'er would join their throng.
To leave her long,
She pray'd me, and be strong,

"A man, her good prefer,
And let my love deter
The impulse of the beast,
That on her heart would feast;
Or else she must infer,
She could no err,
I lov'd myself, not her.

"My face with shame first red,
To anger paled instead;
  And yet I spoke no word;
  For had I spoke or stir'd,
I must have struck her dead.
    She would have fled,
But fell from terror dread.

"I left her lying there,
Pass'd down the darkened stair,
  Then out upon the street
  I drag'd my sullen feet.
A sweetness fill'd the air,
    The night was fair,
The world reposed from care.

"Mercy can never blot
The foul and lurid spot,
  In all the years of time;
  Nor mem'ry hide the crime--
'Twas just one fatal shot,
    My soul may rot,
Perish the crime cannot.

"'O God!' he gasped, and fell;
And I sank down to hell;
  For 'neath the poplar tree,
  He turn'd his eyes on me,
And look'd a sad farewell,—
    He could not tell
I was the criminal.

"Oh, pure one, tell me why
The heavens hear not my cry,
And yet unto thy ear,
I pour my pain and fear;
Thou dost not turn and fly.
Thy purity
Will save me by and by.

"And so it needs that we,
To find sweet sympathy,
Must seek confessional;
For there it will be well.
The dear society,
Of pure hearts free,
Is earth's divinity.

"At last I understand,
My pain was God's command,
To feel and find Him here,
In human atmosphere,
Not in the sky or land.
When hearts expand,
They speak His Presence Grand.

"Confession makes me free,
From worse than misery
That weigh'd upon my heart;
While love my tears upstart;
'Tis all a mystery,
That's hid in Thee,
Soul of Humanity!"

SONNETS.

TO ONE DEAD.

INTO the silence thou hast gone before me,
And I am left upon earth's restless shore,
Thy voice to hear, thy smile to see no more,
With resignation to endure without thee.
From thy great height it may be thou can'st see
Me plodding on oft weary and footsore,
Under the galling burdens that we bore,
As comrades on our march to destiny.

Thou'st pass'd me, and the earth is not the same,
Strive as I may to fill the void with duty;
And I have fears, they may be groundless fears,
Which press my heart when'er I sound thy name,
That I may lag behind a thousand years,
So great may be thy gains in love and beauty.

A COMPARISON.

A song bird rose and flew across the sky,
The sun reflecting from its glossy wing;
It sang its song, but no one heard it sing,
Fell to the earth, and no one saw it die;
But beetles in the night hours, silently
Prepared its grave, and hid the beauteous thing,
The while its helpless young were perishing,
And its lone mate kept up a piteous cry.

Its life and death are typical of men
Who live and labor in the world unfamed;
Who bravely strive unto the last, and then
Pass out of sight unnoticed and unnamed;
But leave behind them as they go to rest,
The breaking hearts of those that knew them best.

THE DEATHLESS SOUL.

GOD said let there be light, and there was light;
Worlds rose from darkness to return again;
And burning suns unlike the course of men,
Ran eons 'stead of years, then sank from sight:
But He who bade them rise by His great might,
Call'd greater worlds into existence, when
He gave to life His wonderous love, and then
Made spirit victor over death and night.

The soul of Plato and the Son of Man,
Shakespeare, a' Kempis, Milton, or the star
Potential in the great Creator's plan
Who hangs beneath the dim horizon bar,
Or he of humblest mind who bows to these,
Shall live when time has dim'ed the Pleiades.

THE HIGHER FAITH.

HE is not wise who dreams of recompense,
Or seeks approval from the multitude;
But who would serve must serve in solitude,
And fortify his heart 'gainst pride and sense,
And make integrity his main defense.
Because I love the universal good,
I toil in patience when misunderstood,
And scorn the man who stoops to small pretense.

Who loves the truth, his future is secure;
The farthest star beams on his lonely way;
No foe can pierce the armor of his soul;
No thought can live within him that's impure;
No cloud can dim the sun that lights his day;
No power can keep him from his destined goal.

April 19th, '08.

THE WEAKNESS OF CONSOLATION.

THERE is no death! But see what death has done,
In all its sudden, sad reality;
Its hand has utterly deprived me,
And I do wish my woeful heart were numb.
I did not know the face of that pale one,
Held all earth's light, or shone so steadily;
Or from the heart's divine society
Came all the joy that to my life had come.

Would God would let me die, I am so lone,
My faith so weak, my heart so unresigned;
So answer not my deep and wretched moan,
You mean me well, but silence is more kind;
Then teach me not, I cannot understand:
Just come and lead me gently by the hand.

MILTON.

I READ thee, Milton, with a voice suppress'd,
Lost in wonder and in awe of thee;
Thou seemest not a man, but deity,
So great the rapturous music of thy breast.
Thou art as one whose soul has found a rest.
Thy mind so burdened with sublimity,
Pass'd out of time into eternity,
To deal with themes most perfectly express'd.

What wonder that our Wordsworth call'd the star,
And thought thy voice was as the sounding sea!
To sojourn here did'st leave some world afar,
To bring to this thy marvelous melody?
Divinely given to earth, thy lofty mind,
So pure reveals the debth of humankind.

MY ATTITUDE.

COMPLACENTLY, the world, I stand and view,
Nor stoop to scorn the man of base degree,
Nor yield to him my equanimity,
I live a man in this old world, yet new.
Let others babble, quarrel, and pursue
Theirs hates. I'll find content in being free
From little factions and barbarity—
None can enlist or tempt me from the true.

Let equals fight, if they would waste their life,
With tiger's tooth and tiger's thirst for blood.
I stand a neutral, preaching peace and love.
'Tis the unequal fight, the unjust strife,
The cry of innocence, oppression's flood,
That fires my heart with passion from above.

THE PROPHET.

YOU stone the prophet, and the priest reward;
So did your fathers in the days of old;
Your hearts like theirs are crusted o'er, and cold
As theirs low-lying 'neath the fair greensward.
The messenger of God has no accord
With those he'd help, with those he would infold,
From tender love and not from lust of gold,
But lives for duty, toiling when abhor'd.

'Tis best; God grant it always may be so;
For love gains glory by its martyrdom,
And truth is worth a brave heroic stand.
The prophet owes you nothing, hence you know,
He is no hireling if to you he come,
When ways are dark and takes you by the hand.

HEAVEN.

IF heav'n be such a place as mortals dream,
High-walled, with pearly gates and golden streets,
Where many a white-robed spirit waits and greets
The last new-comer over death's dark stream;
If to be blest we must forget, or seem
To lose our hearts for men in their defeats,
Low-lingering in the hells and black retreats,
All hope bereft, no light, of love on gleam—
Then may I perish, body, spirit, all
And pass like clouds that fade at close of day,
Calm after hours of battle, storm and gloom.
Heav'n were not heav'n, nor God the all in all,
Could not the hand perform the prayer we pray,
And guide the lost ones to His ample room.

May 20th, '08.

THE EVENTIDE.

I LOVE the morning, yes, I love it well;
I love the face of childhood and its joy;
I love the growing girl, the growing boy;
I love them better than my tongue can tell.
I love maturing life and the heart's swell,
When soul is on the crest, though cares annoy,
But lose their power when evils fail to cloy
The streams of truth which bear us and propel.

But ev'ning I love better than the morn,
Its triumph, its serene philosophy.
I stand at noonday, and I hail the hours
To come, prophetic, full of hope, and scorn
The man alone who fears and fails to see
That age is best and bears the sweetest flowers.

DAY OF VIVID RECOLLECTIONS OF CHILDHOOD.

FROM dawn till dark unconscious have I been
Of friend or foe, of love or transient fears;
Of skies of stainless blue, or heavens tears,
Or summers odors from the pastures green;
The birds have fill'd the day with songs and I
Dream-like my 'custom'd haunts and paths pursued,
Through orchard, field, through dank and pathless wood,
Nor heeded not dear nature's harmony;
For retrospection did the past regain;
And memory, steadfast, took me by the hand,
And said, "Back to those stainless days again,
Bright as the waters 'bove the golden sand."
Their innocence I breathed with fondest breath;
Assured that mind surviveth time and death.

TENNYSON'S JUBILEE ODE.

THANK God for her. Good queen she was they say.
Take not one jewel from her righteous crown,
Nor utter words to cloud her fair renown.
May her successors be as good, we pray.
Our larger prayer is, May God speed the day
When royalty shall pass beneath the frown
Of those long-time pursued and hunted down,
By human hounds who hold them still at bay.

Old England, mother of our common blood,
Thy annals have a charm for us, afar;
Thy songs awake our hearts, thy deeds inspire,
But man sinks still beneath oppression's flood.
Thy glorious past lays bare the present scar.
Hearts smoulder which should glow with sacred fire.

THE DEATH SMILE.

THE marks of pain and sickness all have fled,
And thou art lying there in thy calm rest,
While only thy cold brow and pulseless breast,
The indications give that thou art dead.
The parting dirge is sung, the service read,
Love's sacred offering to hearts oppress'd;
Who think of thee translated to the blest,
Yet weeping, dew the roses o'er the spread;
While I with reverence contemplate the smile
Which beautifies thy great serenity.
Did'st give that smile for those who weep behind,
And plod alone in pain a little while?
Or to the dear ones in eternity,
Redeem'd long since from woes of humankind?

THE CRUCIFIXION.

THREE crosses on Golgotha mark'd the scene,
Three hateful crosses with their toll of blood,
Symbolic of the age in which they stood,
Offenders on each side, the Lord between.
Both loved and hated, with a soul supreme,
He met his fate in silent fortitude;
One rail'd to please the fickle multitude;
One sought admission to the courts unseen.

And there were broken hearts and bitter tears,
And tongues too mute to utter words of pray'r
And there were scornful hate and cruel jeers,
And all that mocks the soul in its despair;
But there unheard was still a silent power,
That turned the tide of centuries in an hour.

PROTECTING A NAME.

AT birth the world received me with a frown;
My mother pressed me to her heart with tears,
Too sad to smile through all my tender years;
For we received the buffets of the town.
Our blood, now base, before enjoyed renown;
My name, I will not speak it, oft appears
In chronicle and song of former years,
Was never borne by criminal or clown;
Nor do I bear it in my own disgrace;
'Twould be a witness to my great descent,
And tell the world the distance that I fell.
Low as I am the proud blood of my race,
Will keep my secret sacred and prevent
An honored name from sinking down to hell.

OUR MOTHER TONGUE.

WHEN we are sad it mingles with our tears;
When light it is the language of our mirth;
Upon its wings, thoughts soar beyond the earth;
Its reassuring notes allay our fears;
'Tis conservator of a thousand years
Of truth and song, and truth that ere had birth;
Before the century shall fade 'twill girth
The world where deadly evil yet appears;
The poet and the prophet it shall speak,
To feed the heart on song and truth divine,
To heal the sick and strengthen all the weak
Beneath the stars which shine on ev'ry clime;
'Twill raise the slave above the tyrant's rod,
And make of earth an Eden of our God.

HEAVEN IN A DREAM.

O HEAVEN within the highest Heaven above!
Could this sad world thy joys and mysteries know,
'Twould leave in sorrowing hearts no room for woe,
And hearts of hate would be transformed to love;
For I in dreams have tried the starry way;
With dizzy venture my unsteady feet
Did falter and the pulses in me beat
Excitedly at 'proach of heavenly day,
Whose gates shone with the splendor of the morn
Mirrored ten-thousand times in crystal seas;
Whose only light is love forever born,
Forever like the music of the breeze.
No fear is there, no hate, no pride, no boast;
No tongue that has the speech to utter "Lost."

MISFORTUNE.

MISFORTUNE came and I went forth to meet her,
With calmness on my face and resolution,
To meet my fate, or banish the illusion,
But not to yield my heart to grim disaster.
She sped at my approach. I followed after,
And overtook her to her own confusion.
"I buffet fate," I cried, "her name's delusion;
I will not yield to her, but be the master."

Then as the clouds which overspread the sky,
Dissolve before the radiance of the day,
The shadows o'er my life began to die,
And Hope shone steadfast with its beauteous ray.
So trusting in myself, O God, and Thee,
In life or death I shall the victor be.

TO MY MOTHER'S SPIRIT.

TRANSLATED to the Islands of the Blest,
Thy image fair is fadeless as my thought,
And I, in raptured silence, oft have caught
Faint echoes of thy voice, to me the best.
I feel thy hand once more and am caress'd;
And by thy deathless goodness yet am taught.
O may thy goodness be in me inwrought,
Ere my life's star grows dim far down the west.
O Mother, boundless was thy mother heart!
So deep thy love, so tender and sincere!
So tireless were thy hands which toil'd in love,
That as I write this line my tears upstart,
To think that I must live from year to year,
Whilst thou art far beyond me and above.

November, 8th, 1908.

SWARTHY MEN WITH
PICK AND SPADE.

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SWARTHY men with pick and spade,
By the Maker you were made.
Is it to his glory then,
You are little swarthy men?
Short of limb and low of brow,
Do you please the Maker now?
Toiling on with spade and pick,
Like the Hebrews making brick,
For this did you cross the sea,
From your sunny Italy?
Have we opened wide the door,
Slaves to gain, and nothing more?
Dig and call it liberty,
Call it opportunity.

Swarthy men with pick and spade,
By your brothers you were made.
Is it to their glory then,
That you're little swarthy men?
Twice a thousand years of creed,
Leaves the multitude to bleed.
Twice three thousand years of rule,
And such the product of the school!
When we count the swarthy host,
Have we any cause to boast?
Think you God hath given consent,
To our stupid government?
More of justice rule us when
Charged with little swarthy men.

Swarthy men with pick and spade,
Stretch you in the noontide shade;
Eat your morsel of hard bread,
Thankful that you're even fed.
If your heart within you bleeds,
Turn you to your hut of reeds,
Sleep, forget, awake and pray,
Then rise and slave another day.
If a thought, or high desire
Kindles in your heart a fire,
Quench it with your own red blood,
And be content with servitude.
Weary limbs will keep you tame;
And thriving, we will feel no shame.

Swarthy men with pick and spade,
Ask not for your brothers aid,
Toil, and bleed, and pray alone—
They are busy with their own;
They are round and fat and sleek;
You are weary, poor and weak;
They are strong and ought to thrive—
'Tis the fittest who survive;
They have much; the law is fair,
If they drag it to their lair.
From the first the laws provide:
He may waste, who won't divide.
Is it truth, or is it joke,
That he can feel, who wears the yoke?

Swarthy men with pick and spade,
For something better you were made.
Do we please the Maker then,
If we keep you swarthy men?
Labor is a discipline;
But slavery dwarfs the soul within.
Heaven frowns on caste, and class;
Man moves onward with the mass.
Simple truth none can disguise—
Only brutes can brutalize.
By lifting others to the sky,
We gain our immortality.

POEMS.

THE MOTHER AND IDIOT BOY.

I AM his mother sir, that is the reason why,
I cling to him so fondly and shall until I die.

He does not know that I love him, Robert will never know;
He does not know his name, sir, nor hope, nor joy, nor woe.

I was eighteen when I bore him; he was my second child;
E'en then my heart was broken, my brain from grief was wild:

For my first-born died in autumn, six months ere this one came,
And the earth hid his sunny face under the sleet and the rain.

I was a widow then; I should have told you that before;
But 'twould seem I had forgotten all I ever knew and more.

O! such trouble sir, and sorrow! Yet every one was kind;
And that, and a broken heart were all that saved my mind.

How long ago, sir? An age if told in grief and tears;
I am thirty-two, now; so 'twas only fourteen years.

Fourteen years, Robert and I have endured as one;
For who will abide with a child like this but a mother alone?

A burden, sir, to do it? Then you can't understand
What a heart half dead can feel, or the strength of a withered hand.

Unutterable sorrow? Well, there, you have said it now.
Sorrow, sorrow, sorrow, in form, in soul, on brow.

We walk in the early day, sir, just for the morning air;
And then again at sunset, if the hour is cool and fair.

And I pray, and pray, and pray, the Great God out of sight,
To pierce the soul of my boy with a single ray of light;

And to give him the power of thought, if but for a little while,
That he may know his name, and return my love with a smile.

MOTHER LOVE.

I AM his mother sir, that is the reason why,
I cling to him so fondly, and shall until I die.

I know that others hate him. I know that he deserves,
Not e'en a mite from the hand, that ne'er from its duty swerves.

That he has sinned, I know, sir, against God, and man and me,
But it makes no odds, I cling to him from the heart's necessity.

I know that he will scorn me as soon as his trouble is past,
But love less than ingratitude, is a love that cannot last.

And a love that cannot last, sir, bears falsely that great name;
Fore love is love and falters not for sin and crime and shame.

You cannot comprehend, sir? 'Twere a wonder if you could
Fathom the mother-heart, or feel the bound of her blood.

Were it not for her great love, sir, as she warms
her own to rest,
Not even a thought of God, would come to the
human breast.

When I know not what is best, sir, when I know
not what is best,
I trust my heart, not my head, and put my soul to
the test.

And I take my boy in his sin, with an infinite
caress,
My love is the love of God, although my wisdom
is less.

My heart is the heart of God, but the hand of the
flesh is weak.
So that which I suffer in heart, is more than the
tongue can speak.

But the heart in its love looks up, by day and by
night in prayer,
And it hopes, and it prays and it hopes, and saves
the mind from despair.

Since my heart is the heart of God, and the hand
of the flesh is weak,
I trust the Hand that is strong, with a faith that
I cannot speak.

MARRIAGE.

THE man and woman seek each other in
Obedience to an impulse of the heart.
They yield unto the power and know not why.
They know that love has God's approval though
The whole world frown on them and cast them out.
True marriage is not form or sacrament.
No mouthing priest can make a vile thing pure.
No civil law can force two souls to wed,
Or make a union of repellent parts.
We need no law to bind what God unites,
No courts to sever that which nature scorns.
Laws civil and ecclesiastical
Oft evil work and wreck the human heart;
They aggravate the ills they seek to cure,
Or kill the sufferer whom they seek to save.
The power that weds two hearts and makes them one,
That power alone doth hold and keep them pure.

INDIVIDUALISM.

WHO has a mind, and yet conceals his thoughts
Is like a flower that blights and never blooms.
The church, the law, society conspire
Against the man. I'm of the church, and yet
I stand for what the church forbids. I'm of
The law, and yet I wash my hands of it,
And rest my heart in law above the law.
I'm of the social pact by accident
Of birth, and hence I stand apart. I will
Not be submerged. I will be true to self.
I'll love, forgive, an individual be.
None shall impose upon my reason, nor
Will I with others interfere. I'll move
Among the mass and not collide. I will
Not strive with little men. Who's wise, strives not
But uses life to serve the Eternal Cause.

THE COMPREHENSIVE RELATIONSHIP.

I'M not a patriot. I shun the word.
It is restrictive and requires that I
Do service for one little tribe alone.
I'll serve the part by serving well the whole.
I know no black, no white; I know the race.
The race's strifes and fears and hopes are mine.
I cannot serve my brother, if I join
With him and turn upon his foe. 'Tis best
To reconcile them if I can. Thus, would
I serve them both. If they persist and fight
Like beasts, the fate of beasts must be their end.
I will not sacrifice unto the god
Of force. 'Tis viler than idolatry.
'Twill end sometime. Meanwhile, I'll teach and pray.

OLD JOHN BROWN.

FANATIC more deluded never lived.
He drew the sword against the Master's word,
Inspired by Gideon and rough warriors dead.
He had no faith in God and moral law,
But trusted force and rude barbaric war.
To such as glory in red violence,
He tow'rs a patriot, hero, martyr, saint;
To such as love and walk the paths of peace,
His visage stern sends shudders through the blood.
He would not wait on God and destiny,
Love's spirit and the calm eternal law
To move the cruel heart, the people's hand,
But would avenger be, and play the role
Of hatred, breeding malice and revenge.
Call not his action good. Who loves as Christ
Will love both master and afflicted slave
Who loves as God, will also tyrants love,
For tyrants, too, are men, alas! God's own,
Whose feet have wandered farthest from the way.

THE MUSICAL LYRIC.

GIVE me the musical lyric,
Which throbs with the human heart;
Which laughs with me in my laughter,
And weeps when my tears upstart.

I love the drama and epic,
But when I am weary instead,
Give me the lines of the lyric,
Like the bird-notes over-head.

Give me the musical lyric,
In the dear old Saxon tongue,
Which I learned on my mother's bosom,
Ere my wandering life begun.

Give me the lines of the lyric,
When the days are calm and bright;
And the pulses bound within me,
And the heart shouts with delight.

Give me the musical lyric,
When the soul is burdened with care;
And give me the musical lyric,
To utter my deepest prayer.

Give me the lines of the lyric,
Some old and familiar song,
When I have gathered about me,
The friends I have loved so long.

Give me the musical lyric,
When my soul is sinking to rest;
And the sun of life is setting,
Away in the silver west.

And give me the musical lyric,
To awake me from my sleep,
In the wonderful land of music,
Where none awake to weep.

THE SILENT HOURS.

WHEN the weary days are over,
And autumn airs begin to chill;
When the streets are all deserted,
And the village all is still;

Or the wintry snows besiege us
Through the cold and fearful night,
I delight to play the hermit,
By my study fireside bright.

There I live with many volumes,
Ancient wisdom, rarest song,
Truth which brightens as the shadows,
Of the ages creep along.

Spirits of the past come to me,
With their faces calm and fair,
And with voices of such sweetness,
That no speech can e'en compare;

Others who had walked beside me,
Till they pass'd me on the way;
Others who had wrought beside me,
Through the night and through the day;

Press upon me with their presence,
Till I feel their finger tips,
And my being thrills within me,
As their warm lips touch my lips.

Then my spirit seems transported,
From this realm of toil and tears,
To a life that is eternal,
Free from evil, free from fears.

And this converse with the silence,
Fits me for the larger life;
Gives me patience for my trials,
Courage for the future strife.

THE SOUL.

WERE the soul a golden vapor,
Hanging on the mountain's brow,
'Twould reflect the light of heaven,
As that cloud is doing now.

Were the soul a star at ev'ning,
Shining through the gathering night,
It would cheer the worlds beneath it,
With its constant quivering light.

Were the soul a rose in summer,
Sheltered by the garden wall,
It would fill the air with fragrance,
Till its petals fade and fall.

Were the soul the shimmering water,
Of the great and purple sea,
It would mirror worlds unnumbered,
Shining through immensity.

Were the soul a bird at twilight,
Ignorant of right and wrong,
It would join the feathered chorus,
And awake the world with song.

Were the soul as many fancies,
As are born in poet's brain,
'Twould be less than God has made it,
And as transient as the rain.

A WREATH OF ROSES.

'TIS only a wreath of roses,
But I place them on her grave,
With a bosom full of heart-ache,
And the conscience of a knave.

'Tis a tribute of repentance,
For the wrongs of many years;
For the pains which she has suffered,
And her many lonely tears.

It seems almost a sacrilege,
That my unfaithful hand,
Should o'er her cast an offering,
E'en at the heart's command.

I know my gift is feeble,
Since she has suffer'd long,
But a power within impels me,
And it cannot do her wrong.

For her sufferings all are ended,
In this world of cloud and sun;
They were patiently borne and ended,
But mine have only begun.

Oh, look not angrily on me,
You have no pity I know;
Leave it to God and conscience:
For we reap the things we sow.

'Till now I did not believe it,
I was so false and blind;
And it makes my burden harder,
That she was so true and kind.

Ah, this tribute of repentance,
Seems a thing so poor and weak,
As I think of her while living,
Without a rose in her cheek.

Yes, she loved me, loved insanely;
Had I pinned a rose on her breast,
A single rose from the garden,
Or have kiss'd her or caress'd,

With the man's heart and the lover,
Or saved her a single tear,
It would fill the roses with fragrance
As I lay them on her bier.

THE UNREALIZED.

LIKE the transient winds on the mountain's brow,
Sweet heavenly thoughts blow over my brain,
Then die away like the glory of day
When night embraces the watery main.

I sail on a sea where the wrecks of years,
Are cast on the islands fair and green,
But the notes low sung their palms among,
The wild waves swallow which intervene.

And love and joy ofttimes arise,
And to press their lips my heart I strain;
But they pale and die as suddenly
As snow-flakes vanish in April's rain.

Compassion! Compassion! I cry, I cry;
My burden is greater than I can bear;
For my hopes all seem like a far-off dream,
But the pain I suffer is not despair.

OUR FEARS.

IT is not death we fear, we fear existence,
And that uncertain world which men call heaven;
We shudder when we name Omnipotence,
That shoreless sea o'er which our crafts are driven.

'Tis not to-day we fear, we fear to-morrow,
The future wedded to the fatal past,
Love interlaced with hate and joy with sorrow,
Half-god, half-demon from the first to last.

'Tis not the known we fear, we fear the mystery,
That faith and hope and love cannot dispel,
The clouds and darkness 'round all human history,
Which fills the heart with pathos none can tell.

We fear the soul is like a straying comet,
Without a sun 'round which it may revolve;
Or like a silver cloud upon the summit,
Form'd to reflect the light and then dissolve.

VISION.

BECAUSE the vision is not realized,
My splendid hopes shall falter not nor fail;
Misunderstood, I may be and despised,
Yet will I lead my life though foes assail.

I know I shall be dust ere right succeeds;
And time breeds in my heart a discontent;
'Twill ne'er be mine to live and share the deeds
I long for, pray for with a sad lament.

And yet I thank my God who lets me see
Into the future with a prophet's eyes,
And wrests my heart from present slavery,
By dreams transporting me to holier skies.

ROY PHILLEO.

ROY PHILLEO, does your spirit fair,
Peer through the rent of the clouds which hide,
The heavens above, from the earth below,
To pity the ones who on earth abide?

Can you from your height look down on us,
On us who cannot be reconciled?
If you can, then smile a smile on us,
The smile which on earth you were wont to smile.

Not soon shall we who must live down here,
Till promotion comes from the Lord on High,
Forget the night that the stars grew dim,
That one so unblemished, and pure should die.

We did not measure our love for you,
Till the void you left grew deep and black,
And we knew that the days of all the years,
Our earth was never to have thee back.

The decree was written, but it seemed not right,
Nor yet have we power to understand,
Why the Lord so gracious should call for thee,
And lay on us the stroke of His hand.

DOROTHY DREW.

DOROTHY DREW, the fair is dead,
And her face is as white as the lily flower;
She died on the day she was to have wed,
On the very morn, at the very hour.
A silken pillow supports her head,
With its wealth of golden hair;
And a peaceful smile on the face of the dead,
That death could not banish lingers there.

Dorothy Drew is dead, did I say?
The words seem idle and like a dream—
She was to have wed but yesterday
And dead to-day! Ah, 'tis no dream!
For the house is draped in a thick twilight;
And the air is dense with the breath of flowers;
And a sadness broods like the hush of night,
Over these lonely hearts of ours.

Died Dorothy Drew of a broken heart.
Oh, it was a crime of mean degree,
That cruelly forced two souls apart,
And plotted this fatal destiny.
They did it for gold and for nothing more,
All for the world, in a heartless way,
Plundered a soul like others before,
And where love was not life would not stay.

For love was the life of Dorothy Drew;
Denied it this flower must droop and fall;
It was all so plain to me and you—
They could not perceive it, that was all.
They prescribed her a voyage and mountain air;
They gave her drugs and the richest food—
Fools without eyes! I've said it. There!
Had they been human, they had understood.

For Dorothy Drew, I'm glad, I'm glad;
The world no longer to her is black;
Since she bears a heart no longer sad,
It would be fiendish to wish her back.
They plundered her soul, and she went away,
From a world she graced for a little while;
Though wronged, as she rose to a better day,
The vanishing earth received her smile.

ROBERT BURNS.

O ROBERT BURNS, if thou wert here,
With thy great eyes, and tender heart,
The world to thee would yet appear,
God's own, and heaven's counterpart.

Thy soul would note the transient wrong;
But more of goodness would approve;
Thy tongue entrance the world with song,
And all our hearts to pity move.

The things we count the commonplace,
Thy art would raise to heights divine;
For none the veins of gold could trace,
With hands of finer skill than thine.

Though crushed by man's ingratitude,
Resentment never filled thy breast;
Nor changed thy sweet, harmonious mood,
The years that earth refused thee rest.

O, Robert Burns of noble cast!
With all thy pain life was a boon,
A soul-enchantment to the last,
A Sun that set, too soon, too soon.

THE BROOK.

BEAUTIFUL streamlet, calm and clear,
Murmuring ever in accents sweet,
This happiest day of all the year,
As I press the mosses beneath my feet.

What art thou saying, little brook,
In the rippling music thou do'st impart,
Which fills with gladness the leafy nook,
And deepens the rapture within my heart?

"Forever I wind by my mossy way,
Forever I sing from year to year;
'Forever, forever,' you hear me say,—
Forever love, but never fear."

SONG.

SLEEP has settled on her weary eyes,
After a day of sorrow;
Murmur a song, soft and low,
Fall sweet notes like the fall of snow,
Out of the clouds of moonlit skies;
Or flowers from the trees of Paradise;
Nor wake her till the morrow.

Died her warrior the waves above;
Her heart died with her hero;
The portion now that she hath left,
Is memory's sting and hope bereft,
And love. Ah, love! What a curse is love
Which fills the breast of the widowed dove,
And bitters her cup of woe.

Unseen hands their opiates spread,
To give the weary sleep.
Then murmur a song, soft and low;
Fall sweet notes like the fall of snow;
She is dreamnig now of her lover dead;
For smiles her pale, sweet face o'erspread.
Then sleep oh, fair one, sleep.

WHO LOVETH MUCH.

"HE doeth much who loveth much."
The good á Kempis said.
Then love alone doth consecrate
The work of hand and head.

Who lives for love, lives not in vain,
Nor barren grows with age;
But makes the world's wide desert path,
A holy pilgrimage.

His life new beauties will reveal,
And raptures swell his breast,
And love shall be his recompense,
And God shall be his rest.

BATH KOL.

TO the ancient seer and prophet,
Of the dreary long ago,
Came the voice of inspiration,
Softly as the fall of snow,
As the echo of a whisper,
And it made their hearts rejoice;
So they called the silent oracle,
"The Daughter of a Voice."

Seer, and prophet both have perish'd,
Both have mingled with the dust;
Creed, and system too have vanished;
What seemed gold was only rust;
Smoke and incense from the altar,
Faded in the silent air;
Fallen are the walls of temple,
Lost the ritual and the prayer.

What is left? I see thou art doubting,
And thy mind is sore distress'd;
Truth is left, and the Great Spirit;
So have faith, and so find rest;
Truth remains, and God remains
Everlasting; make thy choice,
'Twixt the ritual and it's letter,
And "The Daughter of a Voice."

WHEN I AM DEAD.

WHEN I am dead, Oh let me sleep,
In some secluded spot,
Where toil and strife are never heard;
But I would not be forgot.

I love the hill-side where the sun,
Of spring first melts the snow,
And 'neath its friendly turf would sleep,
Where the earliest violets blow.

And if ye mourn, and seek my grave,
Come with the twilight hours,
While dew-drops sparkle on the grass,
And deck it fair with flowers.

A LEGEND OF ISSA.

THE Temple of old to the ground was raz'd.
And its golden vessels borne away,
So a legend runs; and those who prais'd
Their God therein had ceas'd to pray.
To the Holy Issa, therefore, they came,
And begged him to tell them how or where,
They might call upon the Father's name,
And gain His pity in their despair.

The prophet heard and calmly spoke:—
"The heart is the temple of our God,
And naught to Him is the altar's smoke,
Or the ground where the chanting priest hath trod.
He seeks the incense of holy thought,
The service of hands and feet and eyes,
Nor hides His face whenever sought,
In the humble spirit of sacrifice."

DOUBT AND DOGMA.

OFT we're driven by our passions,
Wounded time and time again;
But the blight of doubt and dogma,
Kills the little life of men.

MY NEIGHBOR AND I.

MY neighbor sees not as I see,
Nor as I think, thinks he;
Had he my eye, had he my thought,
We'd act in unity.

My neighbor lives not as I live;
I blame him, he blames me;
It would become us both to have
More love and charity.

If I were he, and he were I
The world would be the same;
If both of us were better men,
The world's would be the gain.

If both of us were just as like
As two peas in a pod,
We would offend each other more
Than both offend our God.

'Tis well, perhaps, we differ then,
In creed and piety;
One of a kind is sure enough,
And makes variety.

COULD I.

COULD I but rule the fearful fates,
My dear, you would not sigh;
A joy would spread your pensive face,
New lustre light your eye.

Could I to thee a word impart,
So low that none could hear,
The sky's red tint at early dawn
Would in your face appear.

Could I a single kiss imprint,
Upon your lips so rare,
The gods might curse me for the deed,
But still I would not care.

I CANNOT.

I cannot dream of thee by night,
  Nor think of thee by day;
Nor feel thy absence in my breast,
  When thou art far away.

I cannot see thy many charms,
  Though others praise thee much;
I see no light within thy eye,
  Nor thrill at thy soft touch.

I cannot pity thy sad fate,
  That thou must walk alone;
Thy path and mine lie wide apart,
  And I would keep my own.

TRUE MEN.

THERE are true men, and false men,
The humble and the high;
There are timid men, and brave men,
And men we magnify.
There are little men, and great men,
And men beyond our praise—
Bloody men, barbaric men
Disguised in Christian ways;
But of all the men, the true men,
Our eyes delight to scan,
For true men are always men
Who honor do to MAN.

AT SAN JUAN.

AT San Juan young Capron fell,
As Roosevelt led his Riders bold;
The line press'd forward toward the foe,
And the hero's heart grew cold.

Up San Juan the Regulars came;
They came with zeal and fire and joy;
The father saw young Capron's face,
And he said, "Well done, my boy!"

THE FIRST INSPIRATION.

AT some hour in the distant time,
There cross'd the precincts of our kind,
A vision of the heavenly clime,
Which rapture chain'd the brutish mind,
And raised the race from savage state,
And led man to the paths of love,
That he in deeds might imitate
The deeds of angels up above.

FAILURE'S RECOMPENSE.

HE had victory after victory,
Success upon success,
And flatterers and flattery,
And envy to excess.

At last he was defeated,
Which none could comprehend,
Then the flatterers retreated,
But he found the faithful friend.

'TOMMY.

TOMMY.

YONDER is Tommy out in the street,
His home is a hell that's his retreat.
His face is dirty, his toes are out,
And his elbows peek through his roundabout.
He gnaws an apple like a dog a bone,
While his little right hand contains a stone;
His big brown eyes are bent askance,
For Tommy's a brick in the street parlance.
There's a battle on and Tommy's alert
For a sight of the boy in a crimson shirt,—
He's hid in the alley behind the fence,
Firing his volleys of impudence.
It is four o'clock and still I ween,
He is fighting battle seventeen,
And ere the curfew rings him in
He'll have forty bruises from brow to shin.
Such is his life from day to day,
Fun and frolic, but many a fray;
For harder is youth than after life,—
E'en its play is labor, its pastime strife.
In Tommy's world there is no law,
But force and fist and tongue and claw.
The savage and the barbaric blood,
Pour through his veins with a restless flood,—
Through brain and sinew and heart and limb,
For the kingdom of God is not in him.

See him standing so dauntless there,
With his head erect and his savage air,—
I admire him more deeply in my heart
Than I do a Cæsar or Bonaparte;
For manhood's cares would not annoy,
Had I the strong heart of this boy,
Or half of his native hardihood,
Or the splendid iron of his blood.

As I watch this urchin he moves my heart,
And I feel a silent tear upstart,
As I think of his lot, how hard it is,
And that mine was once as hard as his;
For in Tommy's world there is no law,
But force and fist and tongue and claw.
But the years our fancies oft expand,
To picture our youth a fairy-land,
But our backward, backward turn again,
Is only a foolish prayer of men;
For of all times youth has the greatest care,
Which youth alone has the strength to bear.
This lad is a brick, and the whole of the town,
Use force and passion to keep him down.
He is kicked from vineyard and apple tree
To teach him the rights of property.
"Move along quickly and out of the way,
You little scoundrel," I hear them say.
"Out of the street with your ball and bat,
Mrs. has headache," or this, or that.
"Come big Blue Coat and run him in,
He has stolen an orange, that is his sin."

"Send him to prison, that is our wish,—
Our nets were woven for little fish."

Both cuffed and kicked my little man,
They'll make you a criminal if they can.
They were never children, never boys,
And that is the reason your life annoys.
May God pity them, and pity me,
In the day that I lack sympathy,
For this friendless boy in his roundabout,
With his dirty face and his elbows out.

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